

PASSIVE BIOMETRIC CUSTOMER IDENTIFICATION AND TRACKING SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

5 This application is a continuation of Application No. 10/080,829 filed February 22, 2002, which is a continuation-in-part of Application No. 09/707,439 filed November 6, 2000 now U.S. Patent No. 6,554,705, which is a continuation-in-part of Application No. 09/588,791 filed June 6, 2000, now U.S. Patent No. 6,234,900, which is a continuation-in-part of Application No. 08/916,270 filed August 22, 1997, now U.S.
10 Patent No. 6,142,876.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

 The present invention relates to passive biometric systems for identifying and tracking persons anonymously in a commercial or business environment.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

 The possibilities for persons voluntarily and actively identifying themselves in commercial transactions are widely known and commercially available in many forms. Customers identify themselves for the purpose of affecting commercial transactions by
20 means of personal identification numbers (PIN), magnetic cards, smart cards, and various biometric identification techniques. In general, these techniques are used when an individual desires to make his or her presence known by positive identification techniques to enable a desired goal, e.g., entry to a secure location, purchase of merchandise by credit, or obtaining funds from an ATM machine.

25 In the gaming industry, similar techniques have been used to enable a casino to track play of its players, enabling the casino to monitor frequent play and reward players with "comps" based on level of play. These rewards may be in the form of free room, food, and beverage, as well as free travel, merchandise, and the like. Player tracking systems using biometric identification techniques have been described in my
30 prior U.S. Patents 6,142,876 and 6,234,900.

Prior commercial customer tracking systems have generally commenced with the customer voluntarily registering at a registration location, and providing his or her name, address, and other identifying information, which may be photographic, an identifying number (such as Social Security number), or biometric information. Thereafter, the commercial establishment can identify the customer each time the customer enters a commercial zone. This is done by the customer voluntarily entering information, such as a credit card, smart card, or PIN number, and providing a confirming identification by matching biometric information with information on file. In some cases, such as set forth in my prior applications, biometric identification may be confirmed by a match with library information without the customer actively entering a PIN number, swiping a card, or otherwise actively identifying himself.

However, certain technological advances have now made it possible to consider the acquisition and maintenance of customer tracking information solely through acquisition of biometric identifying information, without a customer identifying himself to a commercial establishment in any manner whatsoever. First of all, the increasing accuracy of various biometric identification techniques, along with the greatly reduced cost of biometric identification systems, renders these systems more widely useful. In addition, the vastly decreased cost of computer processing power and memory enables the efficient storage of large volumes of information and the search of extremely large databases at extremely low cost. Together, these technological advances permit business establishments to track customers, or identify repeat visits from undesirable persons, without the identified persons having to take any action whatsoever to be tracked. The system can be linked by the establishment to other remote locations operated by the establishment.

According to the invention, a business can obtain identifying physical information on anonymous persons within their business environment. Identification can occur even without the customer knowing it can or did occur. This information can be stored in a file (a "Doe" file) in a central computer system, along with incidents of activity pertinent to those persons when within the business environment. Biometric identifying information is thereafter accumulated from each person entering the environment, and

this information is compared with information within the various files in the library. This is done without active entry of any data relating to the customer at the time of the transaction by either the customer or establishment personnel. However, it should be understood that no biometric system is perfect. Therefore, as detailed below, human
5 interaction may be required to resolve conflicts or errors encountered by a specific implemented biometric system.

If a matching identification is found, information with respect to the current commercial activity is entered into the file. If the frequency of matches, or the level of commercial activity, exceeds a predetermined level, management personnel are
10 alerted. This enables management to actively seek to identify the highest and lowest frequency customers, acknowledging their past and/or continued activity with some action or enabling various amounts of reward for various levels of activity as management sees fit.

Information contained in the Doe file can include negative information, as well
15 as helpful information, relating to a customer's activities. For example, the customer can be identified as a thief, or person who has bounced a check, or created a disturbance. In this case, appropriate management personnel, such as security, can be alerted.

The system of the invention is applicable to any commercial activity, such as a
20 retail store identifying repeat customers, an airline frequent flyer, patron of a museum, or casino customer tracking activity. For convenience, the detailed description of the invention will be described with respect to a casino's ability to track customers of its gaming machines. The ability to track customers enables casinos to reward frequent players with comps and other benefits, in an effort to encourage customers to continue
25 to play at their establishment.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A customer tracking system includes a biometric identification technique for passively identifying customers. Two or more biometric identification techniques may
30 be used in combination to more positively identify customers. For example, an iris scan

technique and facial recognition technique may be used in combination. Information from a passive biometric identification is sent to a central computer system, which searches a library of "Doe" files for matching biometric data.

5 If no match is found, the central computing system opens a new file in the Doe library containing the biometric data. If matching data are found in the file, information with respect to the customer's prior activity is retrieved from the file. If the information is negative with respect to this customer, e.g., the customer has a poor credit history or is disruptive, the central computing system alerts a predetermined appropriate management function, such as security. If said biometric identification technique is a
10 facial recognition technique and is only able to reduce the number of possible matches to two or more, a human being is employed to undertake a visual comparison and resolve the matching issue. The human being may either determine a match has occurred and cause the central computing system to open the existing matching file or decide no match has occurred and cause the central computing system to open a new
15 customer file. Means for said human being to input information to the central computing system is provided.

If the information found in the matching file is not negative, the central computing system searches the file to determine if the frequency of prior customer contacts, or the level of prior customer activity, exceeds a predetermined level. If it does, the system
20 notifies selected personnel to enable them to greet the customer and, if not previously done, identify the customer by name. In most cases, this is done by the processor sending information from the file to a terminal where the transaction is being processed. Any identification which is learned at this time is then entered into the customer's file. If the frequency of activity is less than the predetermined amount, the system simply
25 stores information with respect to the most recent contact in the customer's file.

In order to keep the library from becoming overloaded with a large amount of information having minimal use, the system is programmed to periodically check each file to determine if a minimum number of matches has been obtained within a predetermined time. If there have been insufficient matches, indicating that continued
30 tracking is unlikely to yield useful information, the file is purged. This enables an

establishment to eliminate records of persons who are one-time, or infrequent, visitors, and therefore may not be sufficiently interesting for the business to track. Elimination of these useless files also simplifies the search technique, limiting the number of files that are required to be searched to those which have a reasonable possibility of containing valuable customer information. Conversely, if the system is being used to identify low-frequency matches, the high frequency files could be purged or archived.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features and advantages, will become better appreciated as the same become better understood with reference to the claims, specification and drawings wherein;

FIG. 1 is an illustration of the system and method of the present invention for persons to be signed up to the system;

FIG. 2 is an illustration of one embodiment of the present invention for passive identification and tracking of player's play at a gaming device;

FIG. 3 is an illustration of yet another embodiment of the system and method for passive identification of a player and tracking of a parameter of play of a gaming device; and

FIG. 4 is a flow chart showing an embodiment of the system whereby a customer can be tracked completely passively, without first registering with the establishment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The basic operation of this embodiment of the invention is best seen in FIG. 4, which is a flow chart of the system. In the tracking system of the invention, a customer enters a predesignated zone, which may be a commercial zone, for the purpose of engaging in a transaction. The predesignated zone within a commercial area could be, e.g., the cash register or check-out area of a retail business, the entry area of a restaurant or night club, a particular gaming area, such as a slot machine, within a casino or a hotel check-in location. Upon entering the predesignated area, biometric information capable of positively identifying the customer is taken by the establishment

by any known technical method. This information can be received without any positive action by the customer or by employees of the commercial establishment, such as entering a PIN number, swiping a card, pressing a fingerprint pad, or otherwise registering with the establishment.

5 There are many biometric identification techniques which can be done completely passively, including voice pattern recognition, retina scans, iris recognition, signature recognition, facial recognition, and others. Other techniques may involve some minimal activity on the part of the customer, such as providing a fingerprint, thumb print, hand geometry or topography, palm print, finger length, and others. All of
10 these techniques for recognizing a person involving some biometric measurement are referred to herein as "biometric identification systems." All of these can be used without the necessity for a customer preregistering or performing any act specifically and purposefully for being recognized. The simple act of entering the space, or engaging in a transaction, would cause the system to commence the biometric identification
15 process.

 It is well accepted that current biometric systems are not 100% accurate. Biometric accuracy is measured in two ways: the rate of false acceptance (FAR) which includes an imposter being accepted as a match and the rate of false rejects (FRR) which includes a legitimate match being denied. Each biometric technique has a
20 different method of assigning a score to the biometric match which is compared to a threshold value that defines when a match is declared. Scores above the threshold value are designated a HIT and scores below the threshold value are designated as NO-HIT. An FAR error is made when an imposter generates a match score above the threshold. An FRR error occurs if a true match does not generate a score above the
25 threshold. If FAR and FRR error rates are plotted as a function of the threshold value, they form curves which intersect at a given threshold value. The point of intersection is called the crossover accuracy of the system. In general, the greater the value of the crossover accuracy, the greater the inherent accuracy of the biometric system. For example, a retinal scan has a crossover accuracy of 1:10,000,000+ while a fingerprint
30 has a crossover accuracy of 1:500. It is of course critical to the present invention that

a technique be in place to resolve situations whereby a biometric system comparison is unable to determine a precise match but has limited the possible matches. In such a situation, an individual is called upon to compare the results and determine the correct match or determine that no match has occurred. In reality, most locations
5 implementing the present invention will not have staff qualified to compare retinal scans, fingerprints or the like. However, facial recognition comparisons can be successfully made by ordinary individuals on site.

The customer is biometrically identified, 104, either prior, during, or immediately after, the customer engages in the commercial transaction, 102. The biometric
10 identification system can be located in the vicinity of the commercial transaction, whether it be a cash register, slot machine, entry door, hotel check-in, or the like. For example, at a hotel check-in location the property verifies a guests identity prior to check-in and can then match the verified identity to the corresponding biometric information retrieved simultaneously. The biometric system may include two or more
15 biometric techniques used in combination (e.g. iris scan and facial recognition). The biometric data taken at the point of purchase are then sent to a central computer system, 106. The central computer system comprises a series of files having stored biometric data from previous contacts with other customers. The files may be identified simply by number, where the identity of the person is not known (Doe files) or may
20 include files for customers known by name, address, etc., as well as biometrically. The central computer system then searches its library of files for matching biometric data, 108.

If no matching biometric data are found in the computer library files, the computer opens a new file in its Doe library, identifying the file with an identification
25 code or number, 110. Any desired information with respect to this customer contact is then stored in the new Doe file for future access. The information may include any information considered useful by management of the commercial establishment, such as the date, time of transaction, amount of purchase, or quantity of gaming play, etc.

If the computer finds a match for the biometric data of the customer conducting
30 the transaction, the computer retrieves information, 112, from the matching file and

processes the information as desired by management. For example, if the information retrieved from the file indicates that the individual is undesirable, the computer sends a signal to a security function to take action. This could be the case, for instance, if information in the file indicated that the customer had bounced a check, had credit problems, was a known undesirable, or for any other reason deemed important by the establishment, to alert management to make an immediate approach to the customer.

If the information found in the file does not contain any negative information, the file is then searched, 116, to determine the frequency of contact by the customer identified biometrically in this file, or whether or not the customer is in fact known already to the establishment by other identifying means (i.e., name, address, etc.). If the contact is less than the predetermined level for finding out more about the customer, the information is simply stored in the file, 118, for future access. If the customer is known, then personnel at the point of sale can be contacted to address the customer by name, or share any other information within the file with the customer as management sees fit. For example, a screen on the gaming machine could be programmed to address the customer by name, and the customer could then be allowed to access any information with respect to his frequent player card or account.

If the current contact from the customer elevates the number of contacts within the predetermined time period to exceed the minimum, then establishment personnel are so notified to take whatever action is deemed necessary, 122. For example, a gaming machine player who has had multiple recent contacts may be approached to find out if the customer would like to register for a frequent player rewards system. Alternatively, management may wish to offer the player certain comps or other potential benefits.

If said computer is only able to reduce the possible number of matches to two or more possible matches, human interaction is employed at step 109 to determine which of the possible number of matches is correct or to determine no match is evident. If the human interaction results in a match, said human causes, by computer input means, the computer to retrieve information, 112, from the matching file and processes the information as desired by management. If said human determines no match is

evident, said human causes said computer, by computer input means, to open a new file in its Doe library, identifying the file with an identification code or number, 110. Any desired information with respect to this customer contact is then stored in the new Doe file for future access.

5 Information from the transaction, 102, is sent to the central computer system, 126, and is either stored in the identified player's file (if a match has been found with an existing file), or is stored in the new Doe file, 124, for future access in case the customer revisits the location in the near future.

10 The Doe files in the central computer system are periodically checked to determine if multiple contacts have been made within a period of time selected by management. In order to avoid maintenance of an excessive number of files for infrequent customers, all of the files are periodically checked, 128, for recent activity. If the activity does not exceed a certain amount predesignated by management, the files may be simply deleted, 130. If sufficient activity is found in the file, no action is
15 taken.

 Biometric identification techniques are well known and are commercially available.

 The development of biometric technologies for identification purposes is summarized in the January/February 2000 edition of ID World magazine. While in
20 general, the accuracy of these techniques is increasing, and costs decreasing, as indicated earlier, a variety of factors must be considered when selecting a system for any specific use. While a centralized processing system will undoubtedly be available, a typical casino may include well in excess of 1,000 gaming machines. Each of these machines would be a candidate for the identification technique of the invention.
25 Nonetheless, for reasons previously explained, the use of face recognition or iris recognition in the system of the invention is particularly preferred. Voice recognition is more difficult to implement accurately in a casino environment, which tends to have a high ambient background noise level, and also may be subject to persons carrying on normal conversations in close proximity to the various gaming machines. Currently,
30 face recognition systems, such as Visionics' Facelt NT and Miros' TrueFace are

suitable biometric identifiers, although the rejection rate is somewhat high, and recognition can be impaired if a player is wearing sunglasses, etc.

There are numerous types of finger scanning systems which can be used in the invention. Fingerprint verification systems can use technology based on optical
5 scanners or ultrasound. Some fingerprint sensors are chip-based, where users place their fingers directly on the silicon chips. Optical verification systems are manufactured by American Biometric Company, Identix, Indicator, BAC, FAC, and many others. An ultrasonic verification system is manufactured by Kodak under the name "UltraScan." Silicon chip-based vendors include Thomson-CSF, Infineon, SP Microelectronics, and
10 others.

Face geometry technology acquires an image of a face from the distance of a few feet. Systems then analyze particular features, such as the distance between the eyes and the nose, and the shape and location of cheek bones. Face recognition systems are sold commercially by Visionics and Miros. Though relatively new for
15 verification systems, current systems are designed to compensate for glasses, hats and beards and have the potential to be very accurate and cost-effective, operating with a standard off-the-shelf video camera.

Iris scan and retinal scanning technology is very accurate, and also suitable for use in the invention. Systems for scanning the iris can be obtained from IriScan.
20 Retinal scan systems can be obtained from Eyedensity.

Other aspects and embodiments of the invention are shown in FIGS. 1-3, and can be used with any of the biometric identification techniques previously described. For convenience, the embodiments will be discussed with respect to a casino gaming tracking system, with a specific biometric identification technique being facial
25 recognition.

Turning to the drawings, FIG. 1 illustrates the system and method according to the present invention for initially acquiring the digitized facial images of players for tracking play of the players while playing a gaming device or table game for the purposes of determining awards, promotions or comps to be given to the player based
30 upon play. While the description as hereinafter set forth is directed to the player

playing an electronic gaming device such as a slot machine, it is to be understood that it could be used as well with table games as long as the player is positioned such that a digitized image of the player's face can be acquired according to the present invention.

5 The system 10 includes a data entry station 12 including a processor 14 having therewith a display monitor 16 and data entry means such as a keyboard 18. The processor 14 may be any suitable personal computer and it should be understood that multiple stations 12 could be used to input and manipulate data according to the method and system of the present invention.

10 The system 10 includes means for acquiring a digitized image of one or more physically distinguishing features of a person. While the description as hereinafter set forth is directed to using the appearance of the persons' face as the distinguishing parameter, it should be understood that the persons retina or corneal profile could also be adopted as the physical feature as well as infrared profiles or the like. Sensor, Inc.'s
15 IriScan identification system, which identifies a human being through the structural pattern of the iris is an example of an acceptable commercially available system. Further the system and method of the present invention could be based upon the consideration of several physical features, e.g. facial image and retina profile, to identify players. Thus it should be understood that the system merely requires the ability to
20 passively acquire a physically distinguishable feature of a player. The term "passive" as used herein means that identification can take place without the individual taking a positive physical action to intentionally cause identification to occur, such as swiping a card in a card reader or placing a finger on a fingerprint reader. No invention is claimed in any specific technology for a passive identification method.

25 While any passive identification technique may be used in accordance with the invention, the invention will be described using full facial identification technology.

 To acquire image data of the facial image of the player a digital camera 20 or a video camera may be used whose video image is processed to define a digitized image. While the camera 20 scans the person's face in the visible wavelengths of the
30 electromagnetic spectra, other wavelengths could be used such as infrared or the like

to obtain an identifiable image of the player. As illustrated in FIG. 1, a person 22 who wishes to have their play of games tracked poses and the image of their face 24 is acquired by the camera 20, processed and stored in a suitable data structure for purposes which will hereinafter become evident. The acquired image is displayed at the monitor display 16 and the attendant assures that a clear and correct image is obtained. The processor 14 processes the digital image of the person's face to obtain a gestalt facial image in the manner as suggested by Lambert U.S. Patent No. 5,012,522 or to isolate or highlight data corresponding to unalterable features of the face 24 such as spacings between eye pupils, mouth shape, configuration of the eyes, nose and mouth. Preferably the processor 14 processes the digital image to form facial identification data representing substantially unalterable and unconcealable features of an individual's face whereby changes in hair color or style, growth of beards or a mustache or wearing glasses will not preclude identification of the individual. This data as shown in FIG. 1 is stored for each individual in a facial identification data (FID) library 26 of facial identification data entries illustrated as 28a-d maintained at a player tracking or host processor 29. It is to be understood that while only four facial identification data entries 28a-d are shown, that the FID library 26 would have any number of data entries depending upon the number of persons who wish to be entered into the system.

At the station 12, data is also input by using the keyboard 18 to identify the player by, for example, name and address of the player and signals are issued to open a player account file, for example, account file 30a at the host processor 29 which is stored in a suitable data structure hereinafter referred to as player account library 32. Each of the account files 30a-d corresponds to a facial identification data entry 28a-d.

With the FID library 26 and a player account file library 32 thus created in the host processor 29 data structure, the system 10 and method according to the present invention can be operated.

Turning to FIG. 2, to track a person's play at a gaming device 34 shown as a slot machine, the person 22 sits in front of the device 34 in the manner suggested. A digital or video camera 20' is provided on or proximate to the gaming device 34 and is directed

to acquire an image of the face of the person playing the device 34. Accordingly, the camera 20' may be mounted on the device 34 or may be incorporated therewith. As can be appreciated, since the device 34 has a game monitor 36, the person's face in playing the gaming device 34 will be in a range of positions in relation thereto suitable for acquisition of the player's facial image. Of course, the camera 20' may be mounted at other locations, such as a check-in location of a hotel casino, without departing from the scope of the present invention.

The digital or video camera 20' acquires an image of the person's face and sends that signal to the host processor 29. The digital or video camera 20' is preferably prompted to acquire said image in response to insertion of currency, coins, tokens or by play of the game. The acquired image may be digitized or processed, as suggested in Lambert U.S. Patent No. 5,012,522 to isolate the person's face from any background images. The host processor 29 at 38 compares the acquired digital image of the person's face to the facial identification data entries 28a-d stored in the FID library 26. As suggested in FIG. 2, if the acquired image substantially corresponds to a stored image entry, the identified player's account file, shown as account file 30a, is placed into an open condition to receive the parameter of play from the gaming device 34 being played by the player. A signal 40 is transmitted from the device 34 indicative of the desired parameter of play. As illustrated in FIG. 2, this desired parameter of play may be the wagers made by the player at the device 34. In a known manner, each time the player makes a wager at the device 34, a data signal is generated indicative of the amount of the wager. Thus, as a player inputs coins or tokens into the device 34 to play, signals 40 are issued to the host processor 29. The host processor 29 at 42 allocates the parameter of play, e.g. wagers or portions thereof or points related to the amounts wagered (hereinafter referred to as points), to the opened data file 30a which has been opened for the identified player. In this fashion, data corresponding to the player's accrued points can be assigned to the identified players account file 30a.

As further can be appreciated, since the acquisition of the facial image data and comparison at 38 is adapted to compare data which is substantially unalterable, the correct allocation of points to the player's account file 30a-d is maintained. Furthermore,

the player need do nothing other than sit at the device 34 and play. The system 10 and method according to the present invention passively acquires the user's facial image and in response to recognition of the player opens up the corresponding account file 30a-d to allocate points.

5 Alternatively, situations may arise where the host processor 29 at 38 may be unable to verify the acquired digital image of the person's face to the facial identification data entries 28a-d stored in the FID library 26. For instance, the host processor 29 may be unable to choose the current player profile from multiple facial identification data entries 28a-d stored in the FID library 26. In other words, the host processor may have
10 narrowed the acquired digital image to two or more possible facial identification data entries 28a-d stored in the FID library 26. In such a case, a human being (e.g. security or marketing personnel) is called upon to compare the acquired digital image of the person's face to the facial identification data entries 28a-d stored in the FID library 26. Upon making an accurate identification of the acquired digital image of the person's
15 face, said human being manually inputs into said processor 29 said identification of the acquired digital image causing the identified player's account file to be placed into an open condition to receive the parameter of play from the gaming device 34 being played by the player. If said human being determines that no match is apparent, said human being manually opens a new file corresponding to the acquired digital image of
20 the person's face. The input means for said human being to communicate with said processor 29 can be the keyboard 18, the display monitor 16 having a touchscreen or any other available input means.

 With continuing reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, the host processor 29 may also include a security file library 44 of stored facial identification data images 46a-c for
25 persons such as known slot cheats or other undesirables. This data may be stored, as referred to above, in the host processor 29 data structure or may be acquired and accessed from an outside vendor such as a security service.

 With reference to Fig. 1, when a person desires to be included into the system 10 for tracking of play, the system 10 at 48 compares the acquired facial identification
30 data to the data stored in the security file library 44 to determine if the acquired image

of the person corresponds to any of the facial identification data entry 46a-c stored in the security file library 44. If there is no correspondence, the facial identification data is stored in the manner described above and a corresponding account file is opened at the data structure. If there is a correspondence, a signal at 50 is sent to security who
5 may then handle the situation by confirming whether or not the individual is an undesirable or slot cheat. If the person is not, the operator of the system 10 at the station 12 and more particularly by keyboard 18 can override the security signal to store the acquired facial identification data and open the account file.

Similar to the situation described above, situations may arise where the host
10 processor 29 at 48 may be unable to verify the acquired digital image of the person's face to the facial identification data entries 46a-c stored in the security file library 44. For instance, the host processor 29 may be unable to choose the current player profile from multiple facial identification data entries 46a-c stored in the security file library 44. In other words, the host processor 29 may have narrowed the acquired digital image
15 to two or more possible facial identification data entries 46a-c stored in the security file library 44. In such a case, a human being (e.g. security or marketing personnel) is called upon to compare the acquired digital image of the person's face to the facial identification data entries 46a-c stored in the security file library 44. Upon making an accurate identification of the acquired digital image of the person's face, said human
20 being manually inputs into said processor 29 said identification of the acquired digital image causing a signal to be sent to security who may then handle the situation by confirming whether or not the identified individual is an undesirable or slot cheat. If said human being determines that no match is apparent, said human being manually exits the security file library 44 such that no signal is sent to security. Further with reference
25 to FIG. 2, when a person plays a gaming device 34, if the person's acquired facial identification data does not correspond to facial identification data stored in FID library 26, the acquired facial identification data is assigned a doe file entry 52a-b in a doe library 54 and the acquired facial identification data is stored in the manner described above with reference to the FID library 26. As can be appreciated, the doe library 54
30 of facial identification data, while shown as only including two doe data file entries 52a-

b, can have any number. Furthermore, a corresponding doe account file 56a-b is opened in a doe account library 58 which receives the parameter data and stores the same in the manner described above. Hence, even though the person has not heretofore been identified as by agreeing to enter into the system to have their play tracked, a doe facial identification data file entry, for example entry 52a, for the person and a corresponding doe account file 56a are opened for the player. As this new "doe" player plays, the accrued points are allocated to the corresponding account file.

Hence forward, each time this "doe" player plays the gaming device 34 which is incorporated into the system 10, the system 10 first compares the acquired facial image data to the facial identification data stored at FID library 26 and if no corresponding facial images obtained, compares to the facial identification data contained in the doe library 54. If a corresponding facial image doe file entry 52a-b is retrieved, the corresponding doe account file 56a-b is opened and the accrued points during play of the gaming device 34 is allocated to that file. Again, if the player is neither identified at the FID library 26 or at the doe facial identification library 54, the acquired facial image data is assigned a new doe facial identification data entry and corresponding doe account file. As described herein, certain minimum human interaction may be necessary to compensate for current imperfect biometric techniques. Thus, over time, a library of images can be obtained so that points can be allocated. Furthermore, when a "doe" player is detected, their corresponding account file can be interrogated and if deemed appropriate the person can be approached by personnel to determine if they would like to have personal identification data entered into the system 10 so that their accrued points can be allocated to a known individual.

With reference to FIG. 2, it is also shown that the system 10 can be used to determine whether or not the person playing the gaming device is potentially an undesirable or slot cheat. As shown, the acquired facial identification data as acquired by digital camera 20', if it does not correspond to facial identification data entered into the FID library 26, is tested against FID data stored in the security file library 44. If a correspondence occurs, a signal at 60 is sent to security so that they can monitor or

otherwise handle the situation. If not, the facial identification data is processed in the manner described above.

With reference to FIG. 3, the system 10 and method of the present invention is shown as being used with known player tracking systems. Like components bear the same reference numerals.

As shown, associated with the gaming device 34 is a card reader 62 of known construction by which a player inserts an identification card (not shown) issued in the traditional manner. Hence in the playing of the device 34, the player inserts their card and begins playing the device 34 whereby the insertion of the card opens up the corresponding player's tracking account file 61a-d in a tracking data structure 73, shown as data file 61a, and allocates the points accrued during play of the device 34 thereto. When the player leaves the device 34, and removes their card from the card reader 62, the player's tracking account file 61a is closed.

According to the system and method of the present invention, means are provided to acquire facial image data of the player playing the device 34. Accordingly, a digital or video camera 20' may be provided on the gaming device 34. The acquired image is compared at 64 to the identification data entries 28a-d of the FID library 26 to determine whether or not the acquired facial identification data corresponds to stored facial identification data. If a concordance occurs, the host processor 29 confirms that this is the person who was issued the identification card and if so, opens the corresponding account file 61a. If not, as described above, the acquired image is compared at 48 against the library of images maintained in the security file library 44 to see if the person is a known undesirable or slot cheat. If so, a signal 70 is sent to security to address the situation. If not, the signal is compared at 66 with any previously acquired doe images and if so open up the corresponding doe account file in the manner described above. If no corresponding doe file is acquired, the facial identification image data is assigned at 66 and stored in a corresponding new doe account file which is opened and the points are allocated thereto. To reiterate, minimum human interaction may be necessary to compensate for current imperfect biometric techniques.

As can be appreciated, the system and method according to the present invention enables players to have points accrued during gaming of the device 34 or for that matter a table game where facial images can be acquired, to the corresponding account data file whether or not the person has identification card or not. Furthermore, the system provides a means to allocate acquired points to persons heretofore not identified by the system in dummy or doe files. With reference to the data representing the points accrued to a doe account 56a-b, should the person desire to join in the system 10, when they do so, with reference to FIG. 1, the system 10 compares the acquired image at 66 with doe image data entries 52a-b and if a corresponding image is found, the accrued points are transferred at 72 to a now, player identified, account file 61a.

While I have shown and described certain embodiments of the present invention, it is to be understood that it is subject to many modifications and changes without departing from the spirit and scope of the claims presented herein.